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HOMEMAKERS CHAT

Monday, Oct. 16, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CERTIFIED COAL-TAR COLORS." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Another Washington letter has come. This time it's about the new Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, - or, rather, - about one of its many clauses. One in which women have long been interested, because it bears directly on the safety of their families. The news is about the colors used in foods, drugs, and cosmetics. The law aims to separate the dangerous dyes from those which are safe to use. Of course there are harmless vegetable and other natural colors used in foods, drugs, and cosmetics. Then there is a wide variety of preparation which use coal-tar colors.

Our correspondent writes: "Some coal-tar colors are harmless, and some are not. After January 1, 1940, when the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act goes into full effect, the manufacturer who uses coal-tar coloring is required to use only colors that are officially listed as harmless and suited to the purpose for which they are intended and a sample from each batch of these permitted colors is analyzed in the laboratories of the Food and Drug Administration before they are certified. A number of colors that are harmless when applied externally are not permitted for use in foods.

"Men in the Food and Drug Administration have spent over a year in intensive research on coal-tar colors, getting ready to apply the new law. They have investigated the actual poisonous effect of these colors on animals and in other ways. They have consulted eminent scientists and other authorities. Public hearings have been held so that consumers and manufacturers might present their points

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of view.

They have found more than a hundred colors and shades derived from coal-tar harmless for their intended use. Some of these colors are entirely coal-tar products and some are combined with other ingredients. Some of them can be used for foods, drugs, and cosmetics; others, only for drugs and cosmetics; and a few are for external use only, -rubbing liniment, for example, or cosmetics like rouge. Lipstick does not come under the head of external cosmetics, because lipstick often reaches the inside of the mouth.

But if you think colors are simple matters, you may be interested to know that there are altogether 49 different certified reds, including those for external use only. There are 19 different oranges, 16 yellows, 14 blues and 8 greens, as well as a few violets, a brown and a black. All of these are already on the certified list. Instead of trade, fancy, or chemical names, all the colors are now designated by number. 'FD&C Red No. 4' is the new, simple way of listing a red color which may be used for foods, drugs, and cosmetics. 'D & C Orange No. 9' is a particular shade of orange which is all right for drugs and cosmetics but may not be used for foods.

"There's one interesting exception to the requirement that only harmless certified coal-tar colors will be permitted after January 1, 1940. Some hair-dyes contain certain coal-tar colors that are harmful to some people, but not to everybody. The law permits the sale of hair-dyes containing such colors, provided they carry a conspicuous caution, which says:

"This product contains ingredients which may cause skin irritation on certain individuals, and a preliminary test according to accompanying directions should first be made. This product must not be used for dyeing the eyelashes or eyebrows; to do so may cause blindness."

"The preliminary skin test mentioned in this caution requires at least 24

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hours. It is made on the subject's own skin. The directions with the package must include the following warning: 'If redness or burning, or itching, or small blisters, or any other type of eruption appears in the general area used for the skin test during the first 24 hours, the individual is sensitive to the dye, and under no circumstances should it be used for dyeing the hair. Hair dyes should not be used when there is any disease or eruption present anywhere on the skin or on the scalp.'

"So, if a woman feels it necessary to change the color of her hair, or to conceal those tell-tale gray locks, in spots, she should be sure to look on the bottle of dye before using any of it, and if it carries the caution I've just quoted, she should make a skin test. In a beauty parlor, ask to see the bottle.

"Notice that hair dyes must not be used for dyeing the eyelashes or eyebrows. The regulations concerning coal-tar colors expressly state that 'No coal-tar color should be certified for use in a product to be applied to the area of the eye.' That includes the eyebrows, skin below the eyebrow, the eyelids, the conjunctival sac, the eyeball, and the soft tissue under the eye.

"You remember that there used to be some very dangerous eyelash and eyebrow dyes on the market. The new Food, Drug, and Cosmetic law has definitely forced the worst of these out of business. But once in a while a dye may be found containing a dangerous coal-tar color with a 20-letter name. I'll spell it for you:

P-A-R-A-P-H-E-N-Y-L-E-N-E-D-I-A-M-I-N-E. (pronounced para-phenilene-diamene). If you like to collect long words, you can add paraphenylenediamine to your collection.'

That's the end of our reporter's Washington letter. Shall we run over her main points? She says that after January 1, 1940, the only coal-tar colors that may be used in foods, or drugs, or cosmetics, must be those certified as harmless by the Food and Drug Administration; that there are different colors for different uses; and that hair-dyes containing coal-tar colors not on the certified list must carry a strong caution with directions for making a skin test."

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